

Lost in Dumas

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Lost in Dumas

by [TigerPrawn](#)

Summary

Here's what you need to know -

Grigg from Jane Austen Book Club

Rochefort from Three Musketeers

Premise and very vague storyline from the show Lost In Austen

Grigg finds himself bizarrely pulled into Dumas' The Three Musketeers, or at least a rather colourful, airship having version of it. Finding help in the strangest of places in order to make his way home, Grigg starts to consider how lightly fictional death is taken and that all bad guys can't be as 2-dimensional as they seem on the page.

Notes

This takes place post canon for Grigg and towards the end of the Three Musketeers - from where Milady lets herself fall from the ship before the musketeers can kill her. Some dialogue lifted from Lost in Austen and Three Musketeers.

I had planned this to be multichapters, then rewatched Lost in Austen and decided to do it as a one shot... but then when I started writing it I realised... yes, multichapters!!

beta'd by the amazing Victorine - thanks lovely <3

Chapter 1



Grigg wasn't sure when things had started to go wrong with Jocelyn. He wondered sometimes if he just enjoyed the thrill of the chase more than the catch, but in reality he knew the answer was much simpler. And was a lot less to do with any faults he might have.

He also knew that he hated to admit it because he really hated to think badly of people - but the truth was, Jocelyn just wasn't interested enough in him. It was Jocelyn that had grown bored once caught. He had known what she was like from the get go really - she had asked him to read her favourite books and yet hadn't bothered with his. At least not until she realised that he was going to give up on her. And then she had tried, read the books he'd given her months before. But it hadn't taken long for her to fall back into the routine of her own life, her dogs, her friends. After a while, despite his taking an interest, she even stopped trying to include him in these things. Maybe he was just too nice, but he understood - she was used to being her own person and only taking herself and her dogs into account. It was hard to break out of that kind of routine. Or into it, as Grigg discovered. Their relationship returned to being as one sided as it had been from the beginning. So he hadn't been surprised that when he arrived she had told him, before promptly returning to her routine with the dogs, that she wanted to take a break. That things weren't really working.

So he sat on her couch waiting for her to finish grooming the dogs, which she had been doing the best part of two hours, so they could talk further. He might have been more accepting of if there was a show that weekend, but there wasn't. Maybe she was hoping he'd just leave? She had obviously told him before having to go and do something so that she could avoid at least discussing it in one go, but he couldn't help but feel he deserved more. They'd been together over a year, she had stuff at his place and vice versa. He had become friends with her friends and wanted to discuss how that would work. He stopped for a moment and reflected that she had said a break, not a full break up, but he was already treating it as such and that seemed a pretty clear indication of where his head was at.

He sighed and looked at the book he held in his hands. He hadn't read Dumas since he was a kid, before he got into sci-fi in a big way. But he had loved the Three Musketeers back then, the swash buckling and the adventure of it. Reading Austen with the book club had sort of thrown it up in his mind. This had to have been the third time he'd reread it in the year or so since the great Jane Austen book read had concluded.

He decided to wait Jocelyn out. She wasn't going to avoid what would likely be the last conversation they had for a while, and one that was completely necessary. He was just settling back into the book when he thought he heard Jocelyn coming in, but no, she was on the porch decanting massive bags of dog chow into her storage bins. He considered going out there and making her talk, getting this night over and done with, but he couldn't. There was still something there, even if it wasn't love, and he knew this was her way of coping. They would talk when she was ready. He looked back to his book when he heard a noise, which seemed to come from the bathroom.

"Never fear quarrels, but seek hazardous adventures." He quoted Dumas aloud, set the book aside and went to investigate the noise.

*

Grigg did a double take at first before realising the woman standing fully clothed in period costume in Jocelyn's shower, was not Jocelyn. Obviously.

"Extraordinary." The woman's lips were quirked into a dangerous smile that gave her an almost feline look. She looked a little disheveled, as though she had been wet and had to dry off, her hair sort of frizzy. The woman turned that smile on Grigg and he felt a shiver run through him. Not quite fear, but certainly intimidation. He opened his mouth to speak but was cut off.

"- you will entertain my explanation of it, and it will be truthful, if a little intractable to believe. Let me tell you, there is a door, in the bowels of Buckingham's vessel, which is a place unvisited except by servants." Each word was slow and deliberate, spoken as though her words weaved silk. "Were this door to open, it would give upon the open sea, there is no room beyond. It is a door entirely without sense. One may not pass through it, try as one might, until this day." She looked him up and down. "You are the key."

"Right... what?" Grigg was bewildered. He had no idea who this woman was but he couldn't imagine for one moment this was some sort of weird joke. That certainly wasn't something he'd expect from Jocelyn. Especially not given the night so far.

"Why are you gawping? Are you stupid? Have you nothing to say? I tell you I have escaped from Buckingham through a nonsensical door, apparently with your assistance. So tell me, where am I? I must return to Paris immediately." She looked put out by the whole situation.

"I have no idea what's going on. Who are you?"

She practically sneered at him before answering. "I am Milady de Winter."

“That doesn’t...” His mind went to the book he had just been reading and he started to consider that he might be going insane. Perhaps he had a tumour or encephalitis, something that would mess with his faculties and view of reality.

“You should give me your name sir, it is rude to withhold it from a lady when she has given hers. Do they not teach you etiquette in this place?” She looked with disdain around the bathroom. In which she still remained stood in the dry bathtub.

“Grigg Harris.” He said quickly, even in this bizarre situation he was a little mortified at the thought of having been rude to a complete stranger, even if she probably was a figment of his imagination.

Milady seemed repelled by the name as though it were in some way ridiculous. Before she could say anything, likely cutting from the look on her face, Grigg blurted out -

“Clearly I’m hallucinating.” He decided to book an appointment with his doctor on Monday morning. “I think I may be ill.” he muttered, feeling his heart sink as he glanced again at the woman. She was looking at him quizzically, and clearly annoyed.. “You see, I am a *real* person and you are a *pretend* person. You are the creation of Alexander Dumas-”

“- I am not acquainted with this person.” She interrupted him stiffly.

“You are a character in a book, written by him nearly 200 years ago!”

The sneer returned, as though there was something rancid in the room that only she could smell. “It grieves me, Monsieur Harris, that I must presume to dispute with you.” Her mouth turned up into a wicked grin. “I am as real as you... I have my fleshy envelope, as you have your weapon.” She spoke as though this proved beyond doubt.

Grigg’s mouth went dry and he felt his cheeks burn red. *Did she just say what I think she said?*

“Tell me something I couldn’t possibly know. A piece of information that simply doesn’t exist in my brain if my life is a story as you maintain.” Her expression was taunting, and she was clearly expecting him to fail in the task.

He wasn’t sure he was going to have much luck thinking of anything after her last comment had astonished him so completely. He racked his brains for the slightest bit of information but was drawing a blank. Her words cut through his attempts to think.

“At the least, tell me where I am. Is this France? Are we still on the open sea? This doesn’t look like any vessel I know of but I had thought the same before seeing Buckingham’s airship.”

“What?” He wasn’t sure if she was just talking gibberish now. He was expecting to pass out any moment and wake up having his brain scanned. Her direct and cold look prompted him to say - “This is the United States. America.”

“Is that so? Extraordinary. Here is what I know - The part of Russian America that most intrudes into the Arctic Sea is called Point Barrow. True?”

“I’ve never heard of Russian America.” He thought back to his school days and wasn’t even sure that had come up in history class.

“It occupies the northernmost territory in the west of the Americas.”

“- But... that's Alaska.”

“- I've never heard of Alaska.”

“Well... I’m confused. What does that prove?” Grigg felt like a mouse being toyed with by a very smart and cruel cat.

“It proves that if I show you this door you must believe what I say.”

Really at this point Grigg wasn’t sure why she gave a damn what he thought as she clearly had a low opinion of him. And he wasn’t sure why he was bothered by that, given that she had been nothing but hostile. And also fictional.

She pointed to the panels behind the bathtub.

“That's not a door. All the plumbing is behind there.”

“Yet it is the way I entered. An escape! Buckingham thought he could hold me, he may have saved me from the sea, but he must know he could not keep me long!”

“I don’t... get it. What?”

“I assure you that beyond this door you will find the flagship of the Duke of Buckingham, devil that he is. A place that you claim to be fictional but I know to be real. I suppose the only way to resolve this is for you to see for yourself.” Her tone was definitely taunting. Grigg rarely felt the need to rise to bait like this, especially where fictional people were involved. Even so he walked around to one end of the tub so that he could place his hand on the wall.

As he did so the wall gave, opening as if a door, and he fell through it. Before he had a chance to right himself, he was on the floor and the door had swung shut behind him. Grigg got to his feet and reached for the door in a panic, to discover there was no door knob. He hammered on it for a moment but received no answer.

“Let me back in, this is... what is this?” He was baffled and strangely now praying for encephalitis. “Please wake up, please wake up.” He pinched his arm and it goddamn hurt.

Just as he was trying to decide what to do next, he was tossed sideways as the whole room tilted at an angle and then back, rocking until it reached a near equilibrium again. He could hear shouting and feet running - slamming into the wooden ceiling above him. He looked around him then from his vantage point on the floor. Barrels, rope, wooden crates. A rat ran

across his leg and scurried behind a stack of crates. The shock of it had him reeling back until he hit the wall. Only it wasn't a wall, it was the hull of a ship.

Everything rocked again and he rolled with the motion. This went on for maybe ten minutes before the vessel seemed to settle into a smooth, soothing movement. He was just beginning to regain his bearings when he heard heavy boots and then the loud proclamation -

“Stowaway below! Stowaway!”

*

Grigg had been dragged in front of some fancy British guy with ridiculous hair, who claimed to be the Duke of Buckingham but wasn't quite what he imagined the historical figure to look like or the fictionalised version Dumas wrote of for that matter. The puffed up dandy of a man seemed utterly disinterested in him, only concerned that Milady de Winter was apparently gone. No one seemed to connect the two, maybe because when questioned they decided that Grigg was some kind of idiot from the little he knew. They found him an annoying inconvenience if anything and by the end of the day he had been shipped, literally, off the flagship - rowed in a small boat along with supplies and in loose chains shackled at his wrists, to another vessel. He was tasked with helping unload the crates, the chains just long enough to allow this, likely by design. Even so, they chafed and the weight of them, something he was not used to, tired him more than the physical labour.

When finished they sailed on, the little boat moving down two more vessels to reload and unload. This went on for hours until they finally reached the back of the huge armada. From here Grigg could see land, which was bizarre - the flagship had to be several miles in front. The vastness of the navy was mind boggling - one way land, the other ships as far as the eye could see. The last ship they reached was turning on the waves. A smaller ship, though bigger than the boat he was on.

No one really spoke to him, or rather they spoke at him. Being suddenly upheaved from his own existence into this crazy place which felt like watching the History Channel whilst high, was disorienting. It was also mildly terrifying. He had no idea now how far away he was from the ship with the door that led back to Jocelyn's bathroom. He had no idea how to open that door if he found it. The only thing he knew for sure was that the Armada was crossing the English Channel from Britain to France, and he was now on a ship heading towards England. Soon he would be in a completely different country to the door.

He wanted to lie down and weep, or pull himself together - torn between doing something constructive or something completely unconstructive. But the choice wasn't his. The two men from the boat pushed him up onto the ship, across the deck and down to the hold before shoving him next to some crates to sit. A stale crust and a small cup of water was handed to him.

“What am I to do with him?” A burly man in the new hold asked.

“Turn him to the guard once you reach shore? Or keep him locked up down here for all I care. Not much meat on him, probably won't last long labouring, but maybe he can swab a deck. Hear me boy? Can you swab a deck?”

Grigg looked up and his mouth, filled with dry bread, fell slack but he didn't answer. He had a rough idea what he was being asked but had no idea whether it would be worse to answer in the positive or negative.

"He's an idiot," the other man from his boat confirmed and then the two left him in his new surroundings. The burly man looked him over for a moment before shaking his head and walking off. Grigg felt a constricting tightness in his throat and an ache in his chest. He was either insane or this was really happening. And either way he had to wonder if it would have been a darn sight better to have been dragged into an Austen instead. Perhaps it was the lack of proper food and sleep, the fact that he was a little delirious from both, that made him consider he would have looked quite smart in Regency britches.

*

Grigg must have fallen asleep because the next thing he knew he was blasted awake. He flew across the hold and landed awkwardly against some barrels. He could hear shouting and screaming, gunfire and loud booming noises that shook when they sounded, and then shook again when there was an impact.

Cannons, he realised, and his blood chilled at the thought. His shirt and trousers, already dirty and torn from shifting cargo, were now bloodied. Nothing serious, but he could feel the cuts and bruises and his ribs ached where he had slammed into a barrel.

He again just wanted to curl up and wish himself away, or wake up or whatever needed to happen for him not to be on a ship that was apparently being blown apart. The thought was gone in an instant though as the boat rocked again. Another boom and the sound of wood splintering so loudly it resembled a crack of thunder. When the violence of the rocking calmed a little, Grigg could feel the sea pouring in around him. He got to his feet quickly and sloshed through the rapidly rising water until he found some stairs.

Grigg could hear the commotion up on the deck before he reached the top of the stairs. Orders being shouted, heavy footfalls running, screams. He braced himself before moving up and out into the hectic melee.

He found shelter near the mast. The sun was setting so it was difficult to make out a great deal, but it became immediately apparent that there were no other ships in sight. The armada was miles ahead of them and the sea around them was calm but for the waves caused by the rocking of their small ship with each cannon hit.

The ship rocked again and a hole appeared in the deck a little further down from him; it was only going to be a matter of time before the ship disintegrated around him. Grigg tried to work out the direction the cannon ball had come from, when the setting sun suddenly darkened as though a thick cloud obscured it. When Grigg looked up and over his shoulder the whole sky seemed to be filled with a monstrously huge ship, flying with ease through the open air above. As the vast hull passed overhead it travelled further before coming about, and Grigg could see the ship was suspended from an air balloon.

For a moment he was awed. And then he was confused. The historical and literary accuracy of this world he found himself in was so far from correct that it had to be a fever dream.

Lines of heavy rope ladders started to drop all around him, one directly hitting his shoulder and flooring him with the unexpected weight. He rolled aside as he saw that each ladder had a man in some sort of military uniform quickly sliding from the ship above to the dying vessel he found himself on. Hand to hand combat commenced. He was only saved by the good fortune of having rolled into the shadows between two cannons. As men were slaughtered around him Grigg could only think to run. On the open ocean it wasn't something that was possible, and he had no idea if and where any life rafts might be.

Grigg was a strong swimmer but he could no longer see the coast in the fading light which made it crazy to even think of swimming for shore, not least because the chain between his wrists would definitely make swimming impossible.

As he was thinking of his non-existent options, one of the crew fell next to him. They were face to face but the crewman's eyes were vacant and blood pooled from his mouth. Without further thought Grigg was on his feet. He grabbed hold of the nearest ladder and started to climb, seemingly unnoticed in the foray.

The ladder felt almost endless. He wasn't in bad shape, he cycled pretty much everywhere, but the upper body strength needed for this required muscles he hadn't used since climbing a gym rope in school. The sway of the rope didn't help - it was like climbing through mid air, which was of course what he was doing. When he reached the top, hauling himself to the undamaged deck was almost as difficult. But he managed it, rolling onto his back and trying to regain his bearings and catch his breath as the chain lay heavy across his chest.

There was commotion up here too, but not the same as the panicked fear below. He looked about him and saw that the deck was fairly clear, but for a handful of crew managing the rope ladders and others reloading the cannons. He realised he was right next to one a few moments before a crewman started towards it, and him. He rolled into the shadows and then crawled aft until he reached the doors to below deck.

"An excellent test, sir. We will be upon the stolen ship soon!" A voice near the ship's wheel called over the noise.

He had no idea who these people were, where they had come from, where they were going and what the hell they were doing blowing up the ship below. All he knew was he was in the sky, he was not drowning, he had not been stabbed or shot, and he would like to remain all these things. Grigg practically fell down the stairs, going lower and lower, hiding in shadows and avoiding crew until he was in the hold. And then he hid.

*

Grigg must have fallen asleep. All he could remember was the smooth feel about him, like he was gliding, like the time he had gone with Allegra to a skydive. When he came to fully, he realised that was almost the case. The ship cut through the air with ease, in which direction he could only guess. He had to hope that it was towards the armada. He reflected on his plentiful viewings of Star Trek and Buffy and gave way to a grudging acceptance, that at the least this might be some puzzle his brain had thrown up and he had to solve it to wake up. Finding the ship with the door back to Jocelyn's house seemed like the key.

He managed to break open the top off a crate and found some sort of biscuits within. He returned to the little nest he had made for himself and started to eat. It was meagre and foul but even so it made him feel sleepy again. He might have nodded off if not for the sudden and erratic movements of the ship and the sound of cannons once more. He let out a pitiful whimper as he cursed the continued danger he found himself in. It felt like it lasted hours, ship shuddering each time it fired, and the sound of returning fire and sharp thuds as the opposing cannon balls appeared to bounce off this ship's hull. He was considering trying to find a porthole to look out and ascertain the situation and perhaps another means of escape, when the sound of a skirmish drew him back to his shadows. It sounded like no more than two people, but they grew closer.

"You know what your problem is, boy?" The deep and cool voice was closer than Grigg was comfortable with, he had nowhere further to hide. "You read too many books, and then you believed them. Courage, honour. All for one. But history isn't written by heroes... it's written by victors."

The last words were almost cut off by more noise and now the ship rocked as the previous ship had. Now there were cracks of wood splintering, on this vessel and another close by from the sounds of it. The men continued to fight and taunt through the violence. Grigg poked his head around a crate and was able to see them

"You scared to take me in a fair fight?" asked a young man, again another weirdly dashing costuming that seemed like a more aesthetically pleasing version of the historical equivalent.

"Hardly. I just don't fight fair." A cutting reply from a taller man, his outfit tailormade and cut to fit him perfectly. Grigg's eyes were drawn to the bizarre and sort of ridiculous pointed shape of the man's neatly trimmed beard.

"Captain Rochefort!" A voice called from above, maybe from the stairs, a warning in the tone.

Grigg wasn't entirely sure what happened next. He had been in his hiding place and then he had been sprawled across the floor, which was now at an angle. The motion of the ship had stopped and he could make out noise around him over the banging in his head. He touched fingers to his temple and they came away a little bloody.

He looked around, surveying the damage of a ship almost torn apart. The hull was split wide open and beyond was a rooftop. The two men that had been fighting beside him were now facing each other on the very apex of the roof. Grigg moved forward, watching intently as the military man tucked a diamond necklace into his belt.

He could barely make out the words as he drew closer but knew the older man was taunting the younger. His smirk and the young one's disdainful glare made that clear. He could hear the younger man's reply of - "Kill you." which was only met with amusement.

"If you insist." He can hear them both now. The hull gave way to the roof and Grigg considered his options from there. He was still chained but they didn't restrict him enough that he couldn't perhaps shimmy down the roof and start his hunt for the Duke of

Buckingham's flag ship and hopefully his way home. If he could get past these men without being seen.

With his injured and aching ribs, his skull-splitting head pain and the manacles and chains, it would be easier said than done. He could hear the clash of blades as he tried to maneuver onto a more favourable part of the roof than the narrow walkway currently occupied by the opponents.

He managed to get onto the walkway and then reached across to part of the roof of the adjoining building turret. Hoping there might be an easy way down from one of the presumably decorative pieces of architecture. Behind him the ship groaned and wood cracked as it collapsed further into itself. His heart was thudding in his chest and thoughts of whether this was real or not seemed irrelevant when death felt so close.

As he reached out he felt a little dizzy and his hand didn't quite make the purchase. Instead he slid down a little and was able to catch himself, but not before letting out an involuntary cry of alarm.

He was sure he heard someone say "What the..." and he looked over at the fighting men. The older had turned to discover the source of the distraction and the younger man's blade went deep into his shoulder. He didn't cry out but there was an audible grunt as the sword withdrew. The younger man looked pleased with himself for a moment, but then a blade came at him in quick, sharp strokes until he was cut and bloodied and losing his balance. He fell over the side of the rooftop with a yell, that was silenced with a thud as his body met the ground.

The older man dropped to his knees and then slumped forward with a hand clutching at his wounded shoulder. He looked for a moment like he was about to topple over and join the boy in death. But Grigg found himself reacting. Whereas before he had been paralysed by uncertainty and no small amount of fear, with the swords down and danger gone he rushed forward and grabbed hold of the man just as he was about to tumble. He pulled him back roughly by the shoulders and into his lap, causing the man to cry out in pain and blood to surge from the wound. The man panted as he looked up at him, on the verge of unconsciousness. He looked like he was trying to work out if they knew each other, perhaps if he were a member of the crew and then he spoke -

"Stranger, I am the Captain of the Cardinal's Guard. If you assist me in safe passage from this place, I will ensure you are rewarded." The words were spoken through obvious pain and the man's eyelids began to droop.

Cardinal's Guard? This was nothing like the story he had known, but if there was any sort of relationship between Dumas' book and this strange place, this man would be Rochefort.

Grigg made up his mind immediately to help. Sure, he was a nice guy and he wasn't the type to leave someone to suffer after they had asked for help. But really, in that moment all he could think of was that offer. Who better to help him track down Buckingham's flag ship than the Captain of the Guard, a man who it seemed owed him his life.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Grigg begins to wonder whether he should be so eager to return home.

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry it has taken so long to finish this! It was one of 4 WIPs I had outstanding when circumstances flared up my anxiety and I've found it really difficult to work on them. I'm glad it's finally done and I hope you all enjoy it <3

Milady de Winter coughed the sea from her lungs, the salt burning on the way up and out.

“In case you're wondering, this isn't the afterlife. I'm not dead, and neither are you.” She recognised the annoying English lilt - Buckingham.

“What? How did you...” when she had let herself fall from the ship she had put her faith in fate. She would live or she would die. She hadn't been especially concerned with which. She had discovered she had a heart and it hurt too much to use it so long had it gone unattended.

“Followed Athos.” A blithe and throwaway note there, so dismissive of the man that she had been unable to ruin. If she were to live then she must grow harder or softer, she was as yet unsure which. Buckingham continued, unknowing or unconcerned with her personal realisations - “We fished you out of the Channel.”

“Where are we going?”

“To France, of course. To get back what's mine and pay back, with interest.”

She looked out over the vast armada. War. Harder then, she would become harder and survive as she always had.

And then, curiously, she had found a strange and unexpected door in the bowels of the ship that lead to another world altogether.

*

Grigg woke with a start as the man beside him heaved and coughed but didn't quite wake.

Grigg himself had been sleeping soundly, restfully, and took a moment to get his bearings and remember where he was and who he was with. Rochefort - Captain of the Cardinal's guard. Injured and in equal need of assistance as Grigg. He'd half carried the man away from the destruction behind them and installed them in pretty much the first building they had found - a small stable. It was far enough from the house that owned it that they would hopefully not be discovered if they left at first light. At least that had been his thinking when he had planned to sit watch for the night before apparently falling asleep alongside the injured man atop some hay bales.

He shifted, and then realised quite how close he was laying next to the captain, who was starting to stir. The man rolled and suddenly Grigg was trapped by a heavy arm across his waist, mumbled French close to his ear that he couldn't quite make out. He winced, wanting to roll Rochefort off but without hurting the skewered sword wound in his shoulder. He cleared his throat gently but this only resulted in a tightening of the arm, Grigg feeling a heavy press against his thigh that made his mouth go dry. The man was undeniably attractive, were he less of an asshole and had they met in much different and much more sane circumstances, Grigg might have found this situation altogether different. He shifted slightly, trying to edge away. It was this that finally ended the embrace, when Rochefort attempted to move with him and must have rolled onto the wound on his shoulder. He woke sharply with a cry of pain and sat up.

Rochefort looked around, seemingly bewildered. Grigg took the opportunity to move, starting to get up from the hay but found a painfully tight grasp of his wrist pulling him down and a thin blade to his throat. He stared, wide-eyed and scared at the captain. Rochefort studied his face for a moment and then grimaced in pain and let both his hands drop, the sword falling to the hay.

"You. I do not recall your name." A wary eye roamed his face.

"Grigg-" he started.

"This does not mean I care to know it. What I care for is to know this situation. You are not a military man, that much is obvious, so I do not expect you to give me a thorough report, but you will give me something." There was an edge of venom to the words that sent a chill through Grigg, as it likely did to the captain's underlings. When Grigg didn't immediately respond, the captain snapped out- "report!" a sneer curling his lips over deadly looking teeth.

Grigg felt as if he were under a microscope, being studied by that one cold eye. "What do you expect me to say that you don't already know. Your ship crashed, you destroyed a building, you were stabbed and I brought you here."

"Why would you do that?" The question was quick, the man's expression seemed more as though he were testing Grigg rather than suspicious in anyway. Honesty had to be his only option.

"You asked for my help. I am also in a... problematic situation and figured that if I helped you then you might help me."

A dangerous smile tweaked at the captain's lips and he regarded Grigg for a moment. "I see. Well, I am not an easy man to use. Don't let my current state fool you." He indicated his shoulder with a flourish of his hand and then bit back a wince.

"I just need to get back to Buckingham's ship." Grigg explained, knowing there was a note of trepidation in his voice under the intimidating glare.

"I should help you return to my enemy?" A grin from the captain. "What a fanciful notion."

"I was his prisoner, I... left something on one of his ships... I need to get back to it." Grigg answered firmly, resisting the temptation to stand, or in any way move further apart from the man with the blade still within reach.

"I see. Well, I think you will not be in luck. His little ships will be destroyed the instant they enter French waters." Rochefort moved then, somehow lifting himself gracefully, almost cat-like, from the hay even with his injury.

"I'm not so sure." Grigg replied and then quickly followed, under the cold look thrown at him- "there were a lot of ships, hundreds. It's a huge armada." Grigg realised he was using his hands to demonstrate the size, with a sweeping gesture, and stopped.

Rochefort studied him for a moment, looking down at him. "And should I trust your word? Just because I mistake your warmth for another doesn't give you the trust they earned." a mixture of amusement and ire in his tone.

Grigg flushed, feeling his face redden at the mention of waking as they did. He'd hoped it had been forgotten in all the fuss, but now certainly the memory of Rochefort hard against him was at the fore of his mind.

Rochefort let out a low laugh. "And see how he blushes like a maiden." The tone was teasing but not cruel, softening a little. Even so Grigg turned away and stood.

"Well, are you going to help me or not?" Grigg tried to keep his tone level despite the turmoil of emotions - days feeling like years now.

"Face me like a soldier and ask." Rochefort teased.

All the same Grigg turned, thankful his face felt less heated. "Will you help me return to Buckingham's ship, sir?"

Rochefort grinned. "Yes, I think I might."

*

They had spoken little as they prepared to leave the stable - Rochefort pulling on boots and hat whilst Grigg relaced his sneakers and considered his tattered clothing. It was unlikely anyone would think his clothes out of place given that they were mostly now rags. Even his shoes had become covered in the mud he'd trekked through to this stable. He was stranded and friendly, only the ruined clothes on his back. Grigg could do little more than take the captain at his word, which he hoped was worth something.

The stable held two horses, one a heavy set working horse and the other an old nag which was -"not even fit for the table!" as Rochefort put it, but apparently perfectly serviceable to steal.

"Steal? You take me for a common thief boy? You can see there I have hung a coin purse on the stable door that is at least twice this nag's worth!" Rochefort's tone was maybe a little amused but Grigg didn't look up to check, slightly embarrassed by his own exclamation which had caused such a response. He just nodded and moved to the captain's side to help him strap up his arm, but was batted away. The man had fashioned a sling with the use of his cloak but still winced when he moved, even as he walked the short distance to the horse.

Grigg looked up then and could see the captain was waiting on him. "Well? Am I to ride with no saddle? I cannot make you out, who wouldn't know the basics of horsemanship? You speak well enough that I presume you not to be a simpleton. Am I wrong?"

"I... I'm not from around here." He stumbled over his words.

"They have no horses in this strange place that you are from? Strange indeed!" Rochefort scoffed and then pointed at the tack hung on the wall. "Fetch it down and make ready the horse if you want to make a meeting with Buckingham."

Grigg had done as asked. And then had suffered the embarrassment of having to be instructed from beginning to end on how to saddle a horse. When he had started on the bridle the horse had attempted to bite him, which at least made the captain laugh - and then wince at the jolt to his injury. This was only made worse as Grigg helped him onto the horse, worse still by Rochefort's reluctance to appear weak, making it even harder to seat him.

He had lead the horse at Rochefort's behest and had taken them in the direction instructed, which at first Grigg had presumed to be back towards the city. They had talked a little, mostly Rochefort had essentially questioned in and then laughed at his half truths and called them ridiculous. By late afternoon they were both hungry and tired and outside an inn on a long country road.

"We'll stop here." Rochefort told him.

Grigg stopped the horse. "Where is here? I thought I'd be taking you back to your barracks or camp or wherever it is you command from." He tried but failed to keep little slight irritation from his tone. The sooner he got back to Buckingham's ship, the sooner he could go home.

Rochefort laughed. "You will turn down a night in a warm bed? I will even pay for someone to warm it for you in gratitude for all you have done so far. They have very pretty young men and women here that are very *warming*"

"Are you seriously telling me I've brought you here to get... to indulge..." in his exasperation Grigg could hardly find the words.

"I am telling you that I intend to stay here this evening, what you do is your own business if that is how you prefer it." The Captain replied and then pressed his heels to the horse so that it walked on, Grigg having to catch up to lead it into the stable and help Rochefort down. He

had given Grigg an almost mocking grin as he'd helped him from the horse. Grigg was surprised at the sheen to the man's skin - perhaps riding with the wound had been taxing, he wasn't really wrong that they could both do with a good rest at least.

He watched as the captain disappeared into the inn.

*

Grigg had let the stable boy take care of the horse and by the time he had entered the inn the captain was nowhere in sight but the innkeeper greeted him and told him a room had been prepared for him. He had taken it without much question, grateful for a bed of any kind in what felt like years. The innkeeper had eyed over his dirty and torn clothes when he added that the captain had generously asked them to acquire some clothing, and he had already sent a servant to find something suitable to await him in the morning. Grigg could only give thanks and allow himself to be lead to his room.

The room was beyond rustic, historic really. But still comfortable, warm. And even though the mattress was probably stuffed with hay and straw similar to that which he had slept on the previous night, it was infinitely more comfortable and Grigg found himself drifting off the moment his head hit the pillow.

The next morning light spilled in through the windows where he had neglected to close the shutters, but he realised it was actually a light knocking on the door that had woken him.

"Hello?" Grigg responded, rising to sit on the bed. He'd slept comfortably and heavily and it took him a moment to remember where he was. When he did he worried that he might have been abandoned here when he still needed to find Buckingham's ship.

The door opened and a matronly woman entered. "Morning sir," she didn't actually look at him or sound like she was bothered in the least by his existence, as she placed on the bed a pile of clothes topped with a wash bowl in which stood a jug of warm water. "There'll be breakfast when you come down if you're wanting it." She started towards the door again.

"Wait... the captain, is he up? Has he left?" Grigg asked with no little concern.

The woman looked at him then. "No sir, he hasn't left his bed."

"Oh. Which uh... which room is he in?" Grigg tried to sound casual and not like a man desperately trying to cling to the one thing he had managed to latch onto that might help him return home.

"Next to yours." She pointed to the room right of his and he nodded and smiled in thanks - which she missed as she turned and walked out with no further concern, closing his door behind her.

Grigg washed and dressed quickly in the appropriate clothes he'd been given, leaving his ruined clothes and shoes on the floor for want of a waste bin, and then went to Rochefort's room. He knocked a couple of times but there was no answer. He frowned and knocked one more time to be greeted by a soft groan. At that he should have walked away, but the thought

of the man having himself some morning sex whilst Buckingham's ship might be anywhere perhaps even getting further from them, sent a jolt of anger through him that had him fling the door to the room open.

He burst in, expecting to see some young, pretty thing entangled with the captain, but instead the room was quite dark, had a faint smell of rot and the captain lay in the bed alone. He let out another soft groan and lifted his hand - Grigg went to him.

"What the...?" Rochefort was practically naked with a blanket barely covering him and his skin covered in sweat. The rough bandage that must have been put on it the night before, was stained with blood and was the source of the bad smell. Rochefort's hand of his good arm suddenly snatched out and grabbed him.

"I never thanked you. I should have thanked you for saving my life." Rochefort told him, intently holding his gaze.

"Um, ok. That's fine. I think you need a doctor. I think your wound may be infected." Grigg was genuinely concerned and more than a little unsettled by how vulnerable the captain looked.

Rochefort passed out and Grigg shouted for help.

*

A doctor came and went. It was two days of cold sweats and burning skin before the captain started to slowly come round again. Grigg had stayed at his side the whole time, fearful that he was going to lose his best chance to get home, and yet, dismissing the idea that if he left he might be able to find Buckingham on his own and quicker now. He could even take a coin purse, the captain seemed to have plenty. It was an interesting idea, but there was no way Grigg could leave. He just didn't have it in him to abandon a sick person in need. Because, as accommodating as the inn staff were, they were clearly put out by the situation. By the second day they had given Grigg's room away to another customer.

A couple of times Grigg had thought the man almost lucid - they had talked a little, about childhood games and teenage strife. Rochefort had laughed on occasion, a pitch that indicated he was still delirious. And yet there was something in those moments, he would look at Grigg with an unguarded joy that bizarrely tugged at Grigg's heart.

Several times Rochefort had woken distraught from fevered dreams. Sometimes crying out, sometimes lashing out, but always calmed and soothed by Grigg's quiet words and soft caresses.

During one near lucid moment Rochefort had quietly cried as he told Grigg his childhood home had been destroyed. Grigg was almost glad the man had drifted off again then, though the whimpering in his sleep had strained something within Grigg and he'd stopped himself from holding the man. The second occasion Grigg had almost mistaken for the man being fully lucid. His eyes had shot open and Grigg had moved immediately to get some water, but this was apparently mistaken for his leaving as Rochefort's hand shot to his throat and he growled the words - "Desertion is punishable by death!" Grigg's blood had run as cold as the

words and he was unsure how to react, grateful when the hand fell away and Rochefort slumped, muttering, back to the bed.

Grigg had started reading a book to the captain, that he had found downstairs when he had gone for food - some folktale really - strangely comforting to them both it seemed. When he'd finished that he just started telling him about his life. Framing it as a story - making his business from scratch, moving across the country, the strange group of friends he'd made through an equally strange book club. Jocelyn. He'd felt numb at that point, talking through everything that had happened, realising he'd known for much too long that it was never going to work out, but had kept trying. He sighed and stopped talking. Just sat and watched the man fitfully sleep.

When Rochefort properly came to Grigg had been dozing in the chair and was woken by a light slap to his cheek. His eyes snapped open and were caught in the gaze of that one, stern, eye.

"I said - water!" a hoarse voice demanded.

Grigg quickly poured a glass from the side table and moved to the captain's side, helping him sip at it. He was pushed away as the captain sat back, eyeing him with curiosity.

"You're still here." It wasn't a question.

"Yes, well... where else would I go?" Grigg asked as he placed the water back.

"You could have found passage, there are numerous travellers that pass through here." He stopped to cough, his throat clearly still dry. "All more useful than me currently, I'd wager."

"I considered it." Grigg admitted. He'd much preferred the delirious version of the man. They regarded each other in silence for a moment and then Grigg placed a hand on the captain's forehead and could feel the fever had definitely broken.

*

The housekeeper had come to the room with some food for them and waited impatiently as Grigg had helped Rochefort to the small table in the corner of the room. They sat as she removed the sheets and muttered under her breath that the sheets would need to be burned, both watching as she left the room and shut the door.

"Don't be fooled," Rochefort started with a smirk, as he picked up some bread, "she would be just as nice if we were the perfect guests."

Grigg smiled and gave a light laugh at that. "Yes, customer service doesn't really seem like her calling." he agreed, his smile growing as he noticed Rochefort was smiling at him. Grigg cleared his throat and looked away. "What do you mean, that I saved your life? When you were getting sick you said I saved your life. Your own men might have found you."

Rochefort laughed and answered through a full mouth - "my own men might have stuck me as much as they might have helped me. I am not well liked, and even those loyal to me might

consider an opportunity to reshuffle the ranks. Coins are the best way to keep a man loyal and there are plenty with wealth who would move on me.” he swallowed and downed his glass of water.

“Is that why you wanted to come here rather than immediately return to your men?” Grigg wondered aloud.

A nod from Rochefort as he watched Grigg intently. “You are not a military man, but I am sure you understand - I was at a disadvantage, more than I even realised as it turns out.” He indicated the fresh dressing on his wound.

“Ok then, well, I accept your thanks.” Grigg smiled. “I have the feeling that you’ve never thanked anyone before in your entire life, so I have to really.” He let out a light chuckle, but his face fell when he realised his joke hadn’t been well received.

“Do not presume to know me.” Rochefort spat the words and stood, a little shaky on his feet. Even so, he regained his balance and stalked from the room, leaving the door open in his wake.

*

Grigg had stayed in the room a long while. He washed with some cold water that had been left earlier whilst still warm, tidied his clothes - only really taking them in for the first time. A loose shirt, breeches, a light jacket that fit almost perfectly considering it had not been made for him. Perhaps it was the seemingly endless hours where day and night had blurred whilst the captain had floated in and out of consciousness, but he felt like his life was this room now. Maybe the land beyond too. It was odd, and yet strangely comforting to think of real life, of the break up with Jocelyn, as existing in some other time and place so wholly unrelated to him now. It was like that life were the dream. He lay on the freshly made bed and thought about what life in this world might mean, not realising when he slowly drifted off to sleep.

When he woke it was almost dark outside and the door had banged open and then closed. There was enough light to make out Rochefort lumbering to the bed, giving him enough time to roll out of the way as the man crashed down - the silence broken by a cry of pain.

“Damn this!” Rochefort spat out as he cradled his arm.

Grigg blinked a couple of times, trying to fully wake, before he started to move from the bed and away from the man who stank heavily of alcohol. He was sitting as Rochefort’s good arm shot across him and held him in place.

“You have no room of your own, the least I can do is let you share my bed.” Rochefort slurred the words a little but added with venom - “as *thanks*.”

“It’s fine, I’ll take the chair.” Grigg replied as he tried once more to move.

“Please.” Was all Rochefort countered, somewhere between a request and a demand, and so Grigg settled.

The bed wasn't really big enough for two and so they were wedged together at the shoulder until Grigg decided to roll onto his side, making the split second decision to face toward, rather than away from, the captain. The blanket barely covered them both but he could still feel the heat coming off Rochefort, perhaps the tail end of the fever mixed with the alcohol. He was just starting to drift back to sleep when words woke him.

"I used to thank Brigitte," there was a softness in those words. "I thanked her every day for loving me, for the child she was to give me. We were young then. I was young, I learned how cruel life could be. The fire that took them from me was no one's fault- an act of god." A harder edge seeped into the words "So if I am cruel, and I am, then perhaps it is because everyone should learn that lesson. God is cruel and we are made in his image."

Grigg didn't know what to say, the outburst had been unexpected and sorrowful. Finally he said "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to... it was wrong of me to assume..."

"Ha!" a mirthless response. "Assumptions are all people have of me. Though maybe I regret never letting anyone close. So many years and I have never been known as intimately as I had been by that woman for one short year. My body has seen the intimacy of both love and war, but not my heart." The words were devoid of emotion - merely facts.

Another long silence before Grigg said "perhaps you should try and sleep. You've been very sick and you seem to have drunk quite a lot-"

"I am drunk. Of course, to say such things. I remember flashes now and then of telling you of my life whilst I was sick, and hearing about yours. Is it these altered states that have you pull these words from me?" The tone was of genuine curiosity. "You told me about your world Grigg, it sounds like a place of fantasy and I do not hold with such things. Fantasy is a way to avoid the hard truths of life. A dangerous way." He chuckled to himself then and Grigg felt him move on the bed.

Grigg startled as Rochefort's hand of his good arm moved to his cheek and stroked across the now thick stubble there.

"Not a fantasy but sometimes equally as dangerous, there are other ways to avoid life for a short while." The words were warm, soft, and Grigg found himself melting into them and the gentle touch. It did feel dangerous, but in some ways welcome.

He opened to Rochefort when the man's mouth found his, barely stopping himself from groaning into the kiss. It had been a long while since he'd been kissed so passionately. It was only a few moments before he pulled back.

"No." Grigg pushed the captain off as gently as he could manage without hurting the man. "You're drunk. You might not think this as good an idea when you're sober. And really... I can't... I..." he wanted to say he couldn't because of Jocelyn but found that wasn't true at all. It would be truer that he was scared - he didn't give intimacy lightly himself and had been burned by Jocelyn, had given her everything. He'd changed himself in many ways to suit her and fit into her life. He was done with always being the one to compromise. Finding the words to express all that suddenly became a moot point as he heard gentle snores arise from his companion.

*

Grigg stirred and stretched, only to find his movement restricted by the heavy weight of Rochefort sleeping against him. He hesitated a moment before moving again, feeling a little awkward about waking the man that was almost draped on him. Feeling pretty awkward about a lot - their often personal conversations, that impromptu kiss, and not least the fact that he needed to pee. In the end he was swift as he squeezed from the bed, and quietly let himself out of the room, not wanting to use the pot provided. Instead he went out to the outhouse near the stables and whilst he was there had a jug of water brought out so he could wash.

He tried to convince himself that this wasn't an avoidance, that he wasn't avoiding returning to the room, or even just thinking about Rochefort. The Rochefort he had come to know in the last few days was soft and gentle beneath that hard exterior. He shook his head, why was he even thinking about it? What did it matter? He needed to get home, what this man thought of him, what happened to him after he was home, shouldn't matter. He tried to ignore the fact that it did.

He steeled himself for his return to the room, preparing himself for the likely once more hostile captain he must rely on for now.

When he entered the room Rochefort looked up at him from where he sat at the edge of the bed. There was a forlorn look on the man's face that softened him, all the more for the way his hair hung down. No longer tied back, it sat lower than shoulder length and framed him like the mane of a lion. Grigg tried to ignore the sudden thud in his chest at the sight.

"I thought you had left." The captain said.

"No... I..." Grigg moved next to the bed. "How are you feeling?" He found himself lifting a hand to the man's forehead as he had done so many times in the last few days, it was cooler than ever now.

Rochefort had closed his eyes and leaned into Grigg's touch.

"I'm a difficult man, I know. I've had no need to be anything other. But I meant to kiss you last night." He looked up at Grigg. "I mean to kiss you again should you allow it."

In the far reaches of Grigg's mind was a voice telling him that no good could come of this. This wasn't even real. Perhaps he was unconscious back in the real world, in a coma, anything! And yet, Rochefort's hand felt so real as it took a gentle hold of his wrist and tugged him down. In a fluid motion their lips met as they lowered to the bed, Grigg covering that captain as he lay back.

His wrist was released and instead that one good hand clutched at the back of Grigg's shirt as though to stop him escaping, as their mouths slid together. Rochefort was hard against his thigh, the feel of it making Grigg's heart race as his own cock filled in response.

Perhaps it was the circumstance- perhaps everything with Jocelyn, and then being here and this man who he had somehow bonded with during his sickness - but Grigg had never been

so eager. Perhaps it was his mind trying to convince him that this place, these events were truly real, but he had never wanted to touch someone so much. He was panting as he rolled off Rochefort, away from his bad arm, breaking their kiss. Rochefort's head dropped back and he breathed heavily as Grigg undid Rochefort's breeches enough to snake in a hand and grasp his cock.

They moaned in unison and Grigg claimed Rochefort's mouth again as he stroked, long and slow. He could feel the captain was tense and stopping himself from bucking into Grigg's hand.

"If I believed as I should in the almighty, I would assume you were sent here to save or ruin me and I care not which." The words spilled from Rochefort as he broke the kiss and moved his lips to Grigg's neck. His good arm was under Grigg and hand still grasping at his back, fingers gripping and flexing as he moaned in pleasure before growling "I... I want to touch you."

He pulled the back of Grigg's shirt until he moved, Grigg just nodding, lost to the sensation of it all as he sat back and Rochefort started to loosen his breeches for him. Grigg regained enough thought to realise the man needed help and started to fumble with the fittings. Rochefort was pulling him then, and they were both chuckling at the ridiculous intricacies of trying to manoeuvre around Rochefort's bad arm and ridiculously over-complicated clothing. A few minutes later they were both unlaced enough for their cocks to be freed, and Grigg was straddling the captain. As soon as he settled his weight, Rochefort's hand was around them both, sliding a thumb over the head of Grigg's cock before pumping them together in his fist. Grigg moaned and dropped his head back for a moment before encircling his own hand around Rochefort's and setting a faster pace.

He was so close already. It had been so long since he'd been with someone who seemed hungry for him in this way. He wasn't sure Jocelyn ever had been, he wasn't sure Rochefort was real, but that didn't matter much in the moment.

"Oh god." Grigg was overtaken by his orgasm, it ripped through him and felt like it took his bones with it. He was loose and trembling, his hand falling away as Rochefort continued and followed him with his own orgasm a few moments later, his hips thrusting up involuntarily, and unseating Grigg. He fell forward, trapping their mess between them, breathing heavy and resting heavier on Rochefort as the captain huffed a laugh against his neck.

*

The next two days seemed to pass in a blur as they laughed, shared food, shared stories and histories, shared the bed - again and again. Grigg wasn't sure he'd even cum this much as a teenager. Perhaps it was their imminent separation, but they were insatiable for each other. And with each gentle touch and soft kiss, Rochefort's hard demeanor lessened. Even the cut of his beard and the eye patch did little to make him seem stern to Grigg, like a veil had been lifted.

Morning came on the third day and they lay naked, entangled in each other when there was a knock at their door. At Rochefort's command a servant entered and passed him a note before leaving again.

“What is it?” Grigg mumbled into Rochefort’s chest, tired from a night of exertion.

“As I am feeling well and do not feel that I am any longer in a position where I should fear for my command or safety, I sent word to the guard yesterday while you bathed. They reply that two fresh horses and a small party await us downstairs to escort back to the city.” he paused then, long enough for Grigg to wonder why. He looked up and Rochefort moved a hand into his curls that had become somewhat unruly as the days had passed. “Buckingham’s fleet worries the coast, but was delayed and reduced by a storm it would seem from reports received.”

“Oh.” was all Grigg could manage as he involuntarily curled closer into the captain. He hadn’t forgotten about the ship or returning home, he had just been glad to ignore it and delay the inevitable goodbye. Part of him had started to believe that he would never get home. Maybe even hope for it - that the way home was lost to him and taken from his hands.

“You could... you could stay.” hesitation but then a commanding tone in Rochefort’s voice.

“And if I did?” he asked, not hiding his own hesitation. He really had no idea what it might mean in reality - to reality - if he stayed, he only knew that part of him didn’t care what any of the consequences might be.

“I could find you lodgings, somewhere close to me. I would come as often as I could. You would want for nothing.” His good hand stroked up and down Grigg’s back.

“You want me to... be your... courtesan?” Grigg had gone rigid. A week he had known this man, and in that time he appeared to have convinced himself of some fiction. That the laughter, stories and orgasms they had shared had meant something to both of them. Whether he had wanted it or not, that was the case for him. He wasn’t someone who gave himself over so wholly with no connection. He felt a little betrayed. He sat up in the bed, expecting Rochefort’s hard expression - absent for days - to have returned. It had not, instead there was only a look of confusion.

“You are certainly no courtesan.” Rochefort grinned “but I would keep you in a style befitting my-”

“Whore?” Grigg supplied.

“Such a crass word.” Rochefort frowned but didn’t otherwise correct him.

Grigg nodded. “I understand. That’s all this would be. I understand...” he moved from the bed and began to dress. “Perhaps we should leave. The sooner we are away, the sooner I can get home.” Grigg turned not wanting to see Rochefort’s expression, not wanting to read anything wrong into it as he apparently had been doing for days.

It didn’t matter anyway. It had been ridiculous to even consider any other option than returning home. Whatever this was, wherever this was, he didn’t belong. He considered how he might scoff at the irony of soon waking in his own bed and realising this was all some fever-induced dream that might rival any that Rochefort had.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Grigg returns to the real world, though his reality has been forever changed.

“This is quite fantastic! I myself tinker with devices, even weapons. Traps. Booby traps.” Milady threw an amused smile at the woman sat opposite her, soaking in the adoration in her open expression. “But this is quite the contraption.” She turned the blender on again and watched as the food placed within spun and knit together.

She had been in the company of the lady Jocelyn for several days now and each day a delight. It was an amazing place to visit and she could only imagine the advantages it would bring her to take some of these devices back with her.

“I’ve never... You make me see the world in a completely different way. Everything is new and interesting and...” She stopped Jocelyn’s mouth with a kiss. The delight she had known with this woman was beyond any she had taken with any man. The feeling appeared to be mutual.

“When I return to claim my place in court and help the French defeat that awful Buckingham, I will take you with me. I could face anything with you at my side.” She smiled. She had said such things many times to many people before kissing them sweetly and betraying them. This was the first time she meant those words. “If you will come?” She couldn’t keep the unfamiliar sound of trepidation from her voice.

Jocelyn’s grin was wide and lovely. “Can I bring my dogs?”

*

They rode to the coast in silence, he heard enough to know they were riding to meet the army being amassed to meet Buckingham’s fleet. Grigg was determined to just keep his head down and concentrate on getting home, despite his inexperience at riding and Rochefort’s frequent offers of advice and assistance. He just nodded and tried to stifle the mixture of thoughts in his brain - from achingly sad to pissed off. Mostly at himself. A week in this place and he was losing himself. It reminded him of Jocelyn, how he had immediately been drawn to her and pursued her and - if he had to be honest - put up with her shit, until she finally decided he was worth her time. He wasn’t going to do that again, it ended badly. It had only just ended! He couldn’t jump into this especially when it wasn’t what he wanted. He wanted someone who wanted him. He wanted someone to pursue him for once. This, whatever it had been, was over. He needed to go home.

They reached their destination, the guard pulling their horses towards a courtyard whilst Rochefort halted his own horse and grabbed Grigg's reins to stop him.

"You can stay in my lodgings, until I am able to find something more suitable for you." Rochefort told him, it felt like a command. It wasn't the soft man he had known and shared with.

"No." The word came out as a snap, unintentionally but it was meant. "I'm sure I can find an inn or something."

"You have no money." Rochefort chuckled, it seemed almost fond, but there was an edge to it - that it might be a taunt.

"I'm sure I can think of something." He was good at fixing things, sure mostly computers and electronics, but there must be some trade he could make.

Rochefort shook his head and took a small purse from his saddle bag and handed it to Grigg. He clenched his jaw and didn't take it.

"I'll be fine. I don't need your money. I... don't want to be paid for my company." He was sure it wasn't meant that way, but he didn't want to be kept either. He tried to turn his horse but his inexperience restricted him and Rochefort pulled the rein up tight again and gave Grigg a curious look like he didn't quite understand.

"Please. Take the money. There is an inn on this street, stay there and I will find you later." He leaned across and kissed Grigg lightly as he placed the purse in his hand. The softness of it broke him, and he cursed himself for it, but even so he took the purse and found the inn.

*

It was a few hours before there was a knock at his door. Rochefort stood there with two servants behind, who he made way for and they set up plates of food on the small table before exiting without a word.

"It isn't quite as good as the fare at our previous lodgings but hopefully the company will make up for it?" Rochefort teased as the door closed and he stepped to Grigg, slipping his good arm easily around his waist.

He was in what seemed like more casual clothing, a light shirt, and Grigg could see that his shoulder had been redressed - somewhat more professionally - and his arm was in a sling. He nuzzled into Grigg's neck before he could say anything and he felt himself melt.

Rochefort walked him back towards the bed until they fell together and he could feel the captain hard against his thigh. His heart was racing and his breath hitched as Rochefort's lips made their way to his. He hated himself for opening to the man, and after a moment pushed him back. He studied Rochefort's face -there was the soft and gentle man again, the one he'd come to know and wanted to know more. He pulled him in for another kiss.

*

They were both naked and sated when they ate the food. Laughing and sharing gentle touches. Grigg ignored the pull on his skin as his own cum dried tight on his belly, Rochefort's had slid easily down his throat and he felt his cock stir anew at the thought it if. The lack of lube that he would deem suitable had put Grigg off doing anything penetrative, but so far they hadn't bored of all the other ways they had found to please each other, and the thought of continuing that exploration was so desirable. When they were together like this he felt something, maybe too soon to say it was a future, but something he wanted to feel more of for as long as it lasted. If he were really unconscious and dreaming, this was likely his brain trying to give him something he needed. Something he had yet to find, that he had hoped to find with Jocelyn but never had.

Rochefort ran his hand along Grigg's thigh with a smile.

"You worried me earlier. You seemed upset. I will... I will help you." He hesitated and continued to stroke Grigg's thigh. "If you still want to leave. But I wish you would stay."

"Or you could come with me." Grigg sat back and chuckled. He wasn't sure if he was joking himself, but was surprised by how Rochefort's expression soured a little.

The captain looked away. "I have spent many years working to get where I am, it is not something I anticipate throwing away, no matter how well your mouth fits around my cock."

Grigg stiffened and pushed Rochefort's hand off him, receiving a hard look from the captain. "I thought..." He didn't know what he had thought. He only knew what he had felt and that wasn't the same and it wasn't something he could easily put into words.

"I told you before, I am not an easy man. This is not something I have hidden from you." Rochefort's words were hard and edged with venom. "Did you think you could change me?" He snarled and stood.

"Change? No. I think maybe I was just fooling myself." Grigg replied, deflated. He chided himself again.

Rochefort was pulling on his clothes, struggling around his injury. "We have shared much Grigg Harris, but do not presume... Do not..." He seemed lost for words when he saw Grigg's resigned look. "Buckingham's fleet was spotted nearing the coast, I will assist you as I promised. I will even still consider providing for you here if you wished to stay, but expect no more from me than that!" The words were practically growled.

Grigg was defeated. He nodded. This was it, this was the end of it. He wasn't willing to compromise, not again, and he couldn't expect that of anyone else.

"Thank you." Grigg replied. Rochefort studied his face, but when he said no more, the captain stormed from the room.

*

The sun was only just rising when grigg packed the remaining food into a cloth and tied it. He hoped to get to the stable, retrieve a horse, and make the rest of the journey to the coast.

He wasn't sure how he might find his way, much less how he would then get to the ship and find the door home. Swim? He sighed, and then pushed any doubts down. He would do this. He had to do this. He had to go home. If this was a test or some dream journey or any of a million other possibilities each as fantastical as the next, he would do what he was meant to do. Whatever had made this happen, he could believe it was to learn a lesson. And the lesson had been learned - finally. This whirlwind romance with Rochefort, if it could even be called such, taught him something that the disaster with Jocelyn had not. He couldn't be the only one to compromise. He wouldn't be, from now on. He was resolved. Lesson learned, he was going home come hell or high water.

He pulled on his jacket, pocketed the food and strode to the door with renewed purpose. Horse, sea, ship, door, home. He took a breath, turned the handle, opened the door and stepped into the bookshop he had frequented a million times.

*

Jocelyn pulled a book from the shelf, glad that Grigg had introduced her to this bookshop - it seemed to have books on just about everything if you took the time to find them. She had left Milady in a hardware store nearby, there were items she wished to take with her when they went through the door in the bathroom. Meanwhile Jocelyn was looking over the book in her hands - dog-fancying in 17th Century France. She had considered quite a bit over the last few days that this was ridiculous. To take off with someone she had just met, even if they were the first person she had immediately connected with in this way in her entire life. Because really, this was one of two things - a massive hoax, or she was losing her mind. Grigg was perhaps the key. Since meeting Milady, she'd started to feel terrible about how she had treated him, she wished she could tell him and apologise, but he seemed to have disappeared. No one had heard from him. Likely run as far from her as he could and she didn't blame him. Milady, a possible figment of her imagination, insisted they had swapped places and he had likely befallen a terrible fate at the hands of a man called Buckingham. However, she had promised that if he yet lived on their return she would endeavour to rescue him for Jocelyn's sake - as a sign of her fondness.

Jocelyn closed the book and started towards the register, walking straight into someone.

"Grigg?" She almost laughed with relief at seeing him safe. He looked like he walked out of a British costume drama. His expression was bewildered and continued to be so as he looked at her, and then he smiled and grabbed her into a hug.

*

When Grigg pulled back he and Jocelyn started to talk excitedly at once until finally they both stopped and took a breath.

"You first." Grigg said and was surprised when Jocelyn blushed - he hadn't even known that was possible. But the reason became clear as she began explaining her week and Milady, clearly - politely - leaving out aspects that were causing her cheeks to redden further. He returned the favour during his own retelling knowing his own face was burning as hot.

“Well... ok. I can't explain it, but I'm pretty sure it means neither of us are going mad. Unless we're having a shared hallucination or something.” Grigg considered, yelping when Jocelyn then pinched his arm.

“I think we're both awake. So, ok let's put this down to science fiction or divine intervention. I... I'm glad you're safe.” She smiled.

He pulled her into another hug.

“Let's find Milady and get her home.” Grigg linked arms with Jocelyn and began walking her to the register, noting both the book and the renewed blush.

*

Being in the car was weird. Everything felt weird. Like coming back from a holiday somewhere remote and remembering how life works. Unlike returning from a holiday though, he was glad of it. He had no interest in staying in that strange world and the weirdness only served to highlight it. The sooner he could forget about the entire experience, and Rochefort in particular, the better.

“Stop! Jocelyn, stop the car!” Grigg was in the back, having let the reacquainted Milady take shotgun. If he had been sitting on the other side of the car he would have completely missed the man standing, bewildered, outside Starbucks. As the car slowed he watched as someone accidentally walked into the man, and he sneered, hand on sword.

“No!” Grigg was out of the car before it had completely stopped, his hand staying Rochefort's good arm before he could draw his sword. “No.” He repeated now that the man could hear him. He knew he was frowning and looked angry, and the expression was reflected by Rochefort when he turned. They looked at each other for a long moment and, slowly, the captain's expression softened and Grigg realised his had as well.

“You followed me?” Grigg couldn't help the smile despite wanting to think no more of this than perhaps Rochefort had merely befallen the same accidental misplacement that he had.

“Are my wits disordered by opium? What is this dreadful place?” The tone and hardness of the words sank Grigg's heart a little. He clearly didn't mean to be here, that was certain then.

“It's my home... as I described, sort of...” Grigg sighed.

Rochefort looked around them for a moment before his eye settled back on Grigg. Surveying him, as though seeing him in a new light, a new context. His face softened completely then, and he closed the small space between them, slipping his good arm around Grigg's waist and pulling him close.

“When I realised you were gone I knew I had to find you. I made a mistake, I wanted to keep you at arm's reach because I thought you would make me weak. I thought love would make me weak. I didn't want to risk my heart again. But when you left, I realised that was what you needed, you would not be happy to be little more than my-” he bit back any of the words he might have used, which Grigg found himself glad of. “I was wrong to make that offer, it

was selfish. I wanted to keep you without the risk. It was cowardly. It wasn't befitting a captain. I resolved to find you, planned to find Buckingham's ship, but then I walked through the stable door and found myself here. I unwittingly followed you to this infernal place when I realised I would follow you anywhere. I would betray the Cardinal if it meant I could be with you." His lips had moved closer to Grigg's own with each utterance, but then diverted to his neck, where they nuzzled at the flesh there, making Grigg melt.

Grigg's heart was racing and he stifled a moan as the lips played softly over him, not caring for the looks they were getting from passers by - especially given their clothing. He fought to catch his breath - "What about your duty to France, what about your life? I don't want to go back there."

Rocheft broke from his attentions long enough to answer - "I care little for France if it is a choice."

"But, your job, you... You didn't want to throw away your years of..." Grigg started but lost his train of thought as Rocheft's lips moved to his.

"And I have years more to build a new life, with you." Rocheft muttered against his lips before kissing him again. The kiss was deep and slow and had Grigg aching from within and without.

Grigg would have been lost to the kiss had he not recognised the sound of Jocelyn clearing her throat. The second time she did it, he pulled back and looked up. She was stood with Milady de Winter, both looking amused at the display.

Rocheft disentangled himself from Grigg and bowed to Milady, she gave a shallow courtsey and a knowing grin.

"Perhaps we should head to my place?" Jocelyn suggested, still smiling.

Grigg nodded, trying to hide his own goofy grin as he took Rocheft's hand to lead him to the car.

"Rocheft, I must tell you of the things I have seen here. It is a place of wonder." Milady started and Grigg smiled as she started explaining all kinds of things to Rocheft, and suggesting that he might even get a new eye - a convincing ersatz, she had seen it on box called a television.

"You know, those clothes suit you quite well." Jocelyn grinned, pulling Grigg's attention to her as she said it but it was clear she meant it. "Gives your ass a nice shape."

Grigg laughed. It was nice to joke with her, felt a bit like the early days without the pressure of it going anywhere as they were clearly both beyond any interest in giving it a second chance.

*

Jocelyn, Milady de Winter, Grigg and Jocelyn's dogs stood in the bathroom. An impossible door that should not exist in the wall next to the bath.

"I don't know where it will come out. It might not be Buckingham's ship, that wasn't how either of us got back here." Grigg told the ladies. He hadn't tried to talk Jocelyn out of going. He could see something in her eyes that he was sure had never been there before. He could no more suggest that she was foolish or rash than he could to Rochefort - and he would not do that.

"Grigg, I..." Jocelyn shrugged, clearly unable to find the words.

Grigg pulled her into a hug and kissed her cheek. "Nothing really matters much now does it? You just take your lady through there, we'll wave you off and watch you step through to fictional 17th century France, and that'll be it."

Milady took Jocelyn's hand and smiled softly. She patted the pocket that held the diamond necklace - the Queen's diamonds that Rochefort had still possessed, now they would pave their way back to the French court and the good graces of their Majesties.

"Be happy." Grigg told them.

"You too." Jocelyn replied before she took a breath and stepped through the door. Once the ladies and the dogs had passed through, the wall returned to how it had ever been.

*

The drive back to his own home had been interesting as Rochefort took everything in.

"Is it true, what Milady said about my eye?" Rochefort had asked with a curious interest.

"Yes, I guess... Well, I mean, a fake eye, but better than you'd have had chance for back home. More comfortable I would imagine. We can look into it." Grigg smiled.

Rochefort laughed. "Look into it, yes."

Grigg chuckled but then added - "any reason why?"

"Perhaps I will seem less hard without this." Rochefort touched his eye patch.

Grigg smiled. "It'll take more than that. Perhaps we can shave your beard and dress you in plaid." He left his eyes look quickly from the road to his lover. "No, that might not do it either."

They talked further about what Rochefort might do, his skills, his likes and dislikes. But mostly they spoke of the sights which caused Rochefort to exclaim in disbelief and make Grigg explain them.

When they finally arrived at his home, Grigg let them into the house he expected more of the same - questions, amazement and wonder. Instead, the moment the door closed behind them, Rochefort pulled him into a kiss.

“Where are your chambers?” He broke the kiss and breathed the words against Grigg’s neck as his lips once more found the sensitive spot there he had spent days acquainting himself with.

Grigg didn’t stifle the moan this time, nor did he answer, he simply pulled Rochefort up the stairs and into his room. When they got to the room, they stood regarding each other, both lustful. Rochefort bit at his lower lip before pulling Grigg to him with his good arm.

“So many ways we have learned to pleasure each other, but I am impatient for more.” He muttered the words just above Grigg’s lips, ghosting across them and sending a shiver through them both. “I long for you between my thighs.”

Grigg let out a shaky breath and then a chuckle. “I’ve been longing for that too.”

He was well practiced in getting in and out of these clothes now, and yet Grigg fumbled as he tried, his mouth dry and his mind racing ahead. He took a breath and palmed his hardness through his breeches to try and calm it before he began to undo them. By this time Rochefort was naked, despite his injury, and grinning with some amusement at Grigg.

“Had I known you anticipated this so much I would have held out longer and used it to my advantage.” The captain’s grin grew wicked, teasing.

“What advantage would it give you? You’re here with me, I’d gladly give you anything in return.” Grigg smiled, now divested of his clothing, he crawled up the bed and over Rochefort. “We need to get some simpler clothing, though I’m not adverse to you keeping those boots on next time.”

“There’s only one thing I want at this moment.” Rochefort slipped the hand of his good arm around the back of Grigg’s neck and pulled him into a rough kiss. The action brought their bodies closer and Grigg settled between Rochefort’s legs, their cocks pressing together - a tease that was only just bearable.

“Oil?” Rochefort breathed out the question and Grigg let out a chuckle and reached to the bedside drawer.

“Lube.” He corrected, more glad than ever that they hadn’t experienced this in the inn, he couldn’t imagine how uncomfortable it might have been in comparison.

Grigg sat back on his heels as he made use of the items he’d retrieved, rolling on a condom before squeezing lube onto his fingers. Rochefort watched with fascination as he slowly stroked himself with his good hand.

Grigg smiled at him as he stroked lube up and down his own cock, biting his lower lip at the sight before him. He maneuvered a little, grabbing a pillow and pushing it under Rochefort, hips lifted automatically, eye contact not broken. Grigg couldn’t help the spread of his grin as he pushed Rochefort’s thighs gently apart and then reclaimed the lube - squeezing some to drip down his crack. As the thick, cold, liquid made contact with Rochefort he yelped and jumped. Grigg’s hands immediately gripping to the man’s thighs with a chuckle, keeping Rochefort spread. He stroked his cock once more before pouring more lube out onto his

fingers. He ducked his head, lacing kisses along Rochefort's inner thigh as he circled a finger around Rochefort's rim, spreading the lube before pushing in.

"Good lord!" Rochefort exclaimed, almost sitting.

Grigg grinned into his kisses, muttering words against skin - "bit more of a glide than oil I'd imagine?"

Rochefort just groaned and melted back as Grigg pressed in a second finger. His breath hitched at the third finger as Grigg stretched him as he continued to run his lips and tongue along his thigh.

"It's... different... good... so good..." Rochefort could barely stutter out the words, his accent thick. "I'm... Grigg I'm so close... please..."

Grigg smiled as he felt the one hand grabbing for him, fingers just grazing him. "We should probably get you taken care of then." Grigg chuckled, not wanting to give away the fact that, thanks to Rochefort's beautiful groans, if he touched his dick right now he might cum himself. As much in an effort to calm himself a little as to further tease the tough captain who seemed to be melting like putty in his palm, he moved his mouth from thigh to crotch. He took the head of Rochefort's cock into his mouth at the same time as he pulled out his fingers, earning another yelp, which turned easily into a groan.

He eased back and then took Rochefort fully into his mouth before pulling off completely, placing a kiss on his thigh again before settling between his legs and lining himself up. He eased slowly into the tight heat, bit by bit, easing out and further in each time to more exclamations from Rochefort.

"This is... It's never..." his words disappeared into a groan as Grigg buried himself to the hilt with his own groan, and fell forward to cover the captain's body with his own. Rochefort's hand snaked roughly into his hair then, gripping it at the scalp and pulling him into an equally rough kiss. They broke apart as Grigg began to thrust, his head ducked into the crook of Rochefort's neck as the captain continued to mutter nonsense about the feel of the lube, the difference in sensation.

Grigg tried to keep his breathing steady, tried not to lose himself to the sensation of Rochefort intermittently clenching around him as he neared his orgasm. When Rochefort's fingers dug sharply into his back, he thrust hard and deep and quickened his pace until Rochefort was making sweet, breathy sounds each time he hit the right angle. Those sounds turned into a cry as Rochefort came untouched, his cum spilling hot between them and the tensing of his muscles pulling Grigg's orgasm from him.

Grigg stilled, holding himself over Rochefort both of them panting, as he began to chuckle. "I'm glad you came first, I was so close. I wouldn't have wanted you to doubt your decision to stay."

Rochefort joined with a light laugh and pulled Grigg down to lay his weight on top of him, mess between them. "I don't think I could possibly leave this place now. Not with such wondrous apothecaries."

“The lube?” Grigg laughed, that’s nothing, I have banana flavoured in the drawer.”

He moved back and looked at Rochefort’s raised brow. “Such a thing?” The captain grinned then and pulled him into another rough kiss before muttering against his mouth “I believe I would like to taste that.”

“I think I’d like that too.” Grigg replied.

“I am sure you would.” Rochefort laughed.

Grigg pulled back and grinned down at him. “What happened to that hard man I met? Do you plan on laughing this much from now on?”

“No.” Rochefort huffed and his expression hardened for a moment. “I shall only laugh in private.” He added before grinning. “When nobody is looking.”

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